Cru Bourgeois back on the label

18 May 2009 by Julia Harding MW

From the 2008 vintage, the words Cru Bourgeois will be back on the label of wines from the Médoc. The 260 members of the Alliance des Crus Bourgeois have voted by a three-quarters majority in favour of a new quality charter, which focuses on annual blind tastings rather than on longer-term classification of individual properties. The grander levels of Cru Bourgeois Supérieur and Cru Bourgeois Exceptionnel have been deleted, for the time being at least.

Although the description cru bourgeois has been around for several centuries, the first official classification was not until 1932. Between that time and its annulment in 2007, it has been beset by difficulty in its efforts to gain legal recognition.

Although the term is now more of a labelling term than a classification (although both can be seen largely as marketing tools), the imposition of annual blind tastings as the gateway to using the term should lead to greater consistency. Thierry Gardinier, president of the Alliance, summarised this development as a change from 'classification' to 'recognition'. In a perfect example of understatement, he said: '*Les dernières années ont été un peu confuses, mais nous espérons que la mention Cru Bourgeois deviendra une vraie garantie de qualité avec le millésime 2008*' (the last few years have been a bit confusing but we hope that with the 2008 vintage the words Cru Bourgeois will become a true guarantee of quality).